

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

Boise, Idaho

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News

This has been a busy past few weeks. For the week of spring break in the Boise schools, I drove the wife and daughters to Disneyland via Reno, Bishop, and San Bernardino. We came back via Highway 1 along the central coast of California, turning inland at Santa Cruz to go through Sacramento, Coloma, and Tahoe. Beautiful weather all the way, but I still appreciate being able to call Idaho home.

I took a second week off from work to recuperate, start the garden, rebuild my lawnmower, do taxes, and a little work on tokens. I have only done a little research in county records, so to get a feel for what to expect, I took a couple of days to visit the Canyon County courthouse in Caldwell. It is a nice, modern facility housing records for one of the early counties of the state. Canyon County separated from Ada County in 1891; Gem County was formed from it in 1915 and Payette County split off in 1917.

Going to the County Assessor and Recorder's Office, I asked if they had any early records of licenses being issued to businesses, such as saloons. "No," came the answer, "We never issued business licenses." Further questioning got me an invitation to look at the minute books for the County Commission. Figuring that may be as good as it gets, I followed the Deputy Recorder to the "vault" where she pointed out the books and let me have at them. After examining labels on files and books, I found three major reference sources. First was a file of original applications for beer licenses, 1935-1938. Next was a file of Applications and Receipts for Licenses - Sheriff, 1906-1917. Unfortunately the early part of this file only had summary information, but from the last of 1913 through 1916 and again for the first quarter of 1923, license stubs were included. The gem of the finds was a big ledger book marked Sheriff's License Record. It contained a daily list of licenses issued from 1909 through 1950.

Canyon County collected license fees from several business types, using the Sheriff's deputies as enforcer/collectors. The things licensed were saloons (later beer and liquor sales), billiard tables and bowling alleys, auctioneers, and circuses. (What an odd assortment!) Saloon licenses were for up to one year, billiard tables, bowling alleys, and auctioneers were licensed on a monthly basis, and circuses were per setup or town visited. The result is that now I have a pretty clear picture of the pool hall business in present-day Canyon county and in early Payette, Fruitland, New Plymouth, and Emmett. I can follow business changes to the quarter of a year, and may be able to put together an interesting article on what I've found. There was a high correlation between known tokens and the businesses in the book as well.

You might want to check for similar records in nearby county courthouses. I know Dick Magnuson has found some real gems in this way in Wallace, I have seen similar records in Boise and Lewiston. Let me know if you find any interesting leads as I will be doing more of this in the future, and would like to be able to plan my trips.

One bit of "gold" I came across was an attribution for a couple of 21mm brass mavericks I have had for years. The pool hall of Buys and Corey in Emmett was issued table licenses for the second quarter of 1909. In the third and fourth quarters, the license was to H. D. Buys, but that was the end of the line. Neither are listed in the 1910 census which was taken in April of that year. Further research shows that Henry Demic "Curley" Buys was one of the partners. He was born in Utah in 1877 and was a cowboy in several western states before coming to Pearl in 1903 and to Emmett in 1905. He advertised a blacksmith, woodworking, and horseshoeing business in 1909; whether he had a pool table there is yet to be determined. I have yet to find anything on Corey, but will keep looking.



E-22

E-22(A)

The Get-together

Dean Rasmussen nominated Mike Fritz to coordinate a get-together of Idaho token collectors. Mike graciously accepted the challenge (knowing from his other activities that if you suggest something, you are likely to be put in charge). Of course Dean will get the payback in addition to helping with this function...

At any rate, Mike says for everyone to contact him with any known schedule conflicts you might have over the summer months. He is at Post Office Box 160, Rathdrum, ID 83858. Let him know as early as possible, so we can make this event fit everyone's schedule. Mike said that he thought my (tongue-in-cheek) suggestion of Idaho City would be appropriate, but the facilities are a bit scarce there. It isn't too far from Boise, though, and could make for an interesting side visit.

Greg Manos indicated that the Salt Lake Coin and Token Show will be June 27, 28, & 29. At the moment, I am planning on attending to photograph the additions Greg has made to his collection since last time I was able to do that. I think that is also the weekend of the Boise River Festival.

A New Idaho Dray Check

Dray checks are rare in Idaho. They are a type of piecework token used for paying for the hauling or moving of goods. One scenario for their use would be as follows. The moving company sells tokens to a general store owner in quantity, perhaps at a discount for cash in advance. When the train comes in, there is a load of staple goods for the store, so the storekeeper calls the moving company which sends a drayman with a wagon to deliver the goods. When the job is done, the storekeeper pays the drayman with tokens representing the rate for the weight of the shipment and the distance traveled. At the end of the day, the drayman turns in his checks for his day's pay.



BNF-17
29mm
brass

Dick Magnuson provided the following account of his research into this token, which he has since obtained for his collection. It came from a British Columbia collector who had talked to the grandson of the business owner who pointed him toward Bonners Ferry, ID.

I checked the 1914-1915 Polk Directory for Bonners Ferry and found the name of Chas. W. Megguier (wife Anna) listed as an expressman. Then I looked up City Transfer, but found nothing. This not very unusual as these directories used the names of the owners, rather than their business names. But I then looked up Express and Drayage in the classified section and found C. W. Megquier listed for Bonners Ferry, so he had such a business.

A search of my 1910 directory provided nothing. In the 1912 directory, I found: Chas W. Megquier (Anna) eng steamer (maybe he cleaned engines) Crescent. (The Crescent was not listed in this directory.) This was at a time when automobile garages were just starting up in northern Idaho. the possibility exists these businesses were an outgrowth of one upon the other.

My 1916-1917 Polk Directory lists: Megquier, Chas W (Anna) (The Crescent Garage, \$1615)[assessed valuation for county tax purposes], Bonners Ferry.

Elsewhere in that directory, he was described as the proprietor of the Crescent Garage, Ford Automobile Agency, Auto Accessories, Oils, Gasoline, Fireproof Storage, Autos for Hire, Day and Night Service, Repair Shop in Connection. All Work Guaranteed. (Nothing was listed for City Transfer.)

At the Idaho Historical Library, I found that the September 6, 1912 issue of the Bonnars Ferry Herald carried the last ad for the City Transfer, J. E. Howe, Proprietor. The first ad for the City Transfer, C. W. Megquire, Prop. as shown was in the September 13 issue. There was no article carrying news of this business change in either issue, however there was the following note.



The first of the week James McGreevy opened an employment office in the city transfer building on Main street called the Kootenai Employment bureau.

In a number of instances an "Employment Office" was incorporated into a pool hall. (Unemployed) men naturally hung around pool halls, so it was a natural for a business needing incidental laborers to call there for help. If the owner of the place was enterprising, he formalized the process of matching workers with jobs, and could claim the competitive advantage of advertising an Employment Agency. McGreevy may not have had a pool hall, but his location in the City Transfer building - where the jobs were - was a good one.

The April 7, 1916 issue of the Bonnars Ferry Herald carried the final ad for Megquire as proprietor of the City Transfer and a news item:

The City Transfer changed hands Monday when C. W. Megquire who had been proprietor for 3 years sold out to C. W. Dunn. His father, J. P. Dunn who recently quit the grain and feed business here will manage the business. It will continue in the Casey Hotel block. Mr. Megquire will devote his time to the affairs of the garage he owns in partnership with J. L. Nave.

The 1987 History of Boundary County, Idaho and cemetery records indicate that both Charles William and Annie Ida Megquire are buried in Bonners Ferry's Grandview Cemetery, so it was easy to locate obituary information. There are conflicts between the information in the county history and the obituary, but Megquire was born in Maine in 1876, moved with his wife to Coeur d'Alene in 1904 or 1906. (They should have appeared in the 1910 census, but did not.) In 1911 or 1912 they moved to Bonners Ferry where he and a partner operated the steamboat "Crescent" on the Kootenai River between Nelson, BC and Bonners Ferry. He later ran the City Transfer, was an early auto dealer, operating the Crescent Garage (probably named after the steamer) for about 6 years before selling out in the 1920s and becoming Deputy Sheriff and Night Marshall. He died in 1951; Mrs. Megquire died in 1976.

It should be noted that the name on the token is C. N. Megquier, but our guy is C. W. Megquire. This should not be taken as much of a problem with this attribution as the evidence is very strong. I do not know how orders for tokens were conveyed to the stamp company, but this sort of error is not uncommon. I am listing this piece as BNF-17.

Whazzit???

Quite a few Bonners Ferry tokens have a strange-looking hole made in them. It appears to have started out as a round hole which was later filed to yield a slot. The overall effect looks somewhat like a keyhole. This appears on tokens from:

G. H. Albert	Club Cigar Store
Gilt Top	Pastime
Rosebaugh's Place	

Presumably this was some sort of cancellation or indication that the business issuing the tokens changed ownership. Further research needs to be done to see if there is a logical explanation. The mark obliterates the denomination and some obverse names on several of the pieces. But the question for now is what to call this shape? Any ideas? Incidentally, "Gilt Top" was a brand of beer from the Spokane Brewing and Malting Company.



Recent tokens

We should not overlook the tokens of recent issue. Businesses of all sorts continue to use tokens, but many of them are plastic, wood, or paper and will not be as durable as metallic ones. Food Stamp Credit, school lunch, carwash, bar, and amusement machine tokens come to mind as types we should be keeping an eye out for.

The northern Idaho collectors have uncovered a lot of new plastic tokens in the past few years. Many of the issuing businesses are short-lived, so it is good that the collectors are actively seeking these pieces. I have been surprised by new Boise area carwash tokens. I have grown to expect generic types, but many of the carwashes advertise specials on tokens on their signs. The problem usually is that they sell in quantity only, and my car wouldn't know what to do if it was washed often. At any rate, be aware of new issues!

A pair of new Moscow tokens

Mike Fritz recently obtained this newly-listed Moscow token in a mail bid sale. Shortly afterward, I was able to trade for a token from the same business, however the tokens are different. Mike's MOS-55 is a nice 25mm brass piece and mine, MOS-55(A), is the same size but of nickel composition. Mine is worn in the center of the obverse so it can't be determined whether it carries the line "PROPr". A definite, visible difference is that the brass piece has a period after Moscow where the nickel piece has a comma.



Mike's preliminary research into the history of J. F. Alfs shows that he was listed as saloon keeper in 1893, 1896, and 1900 directories, but not in 1892 or 1908. As time permits I will delve into the early Moscow newspapers to see if he advertised or otherwise "made the news." Checks into Moscow cemetery records and the 1910 Census have found nothing on him or family members.

A recent look at the Star-Mirror newspaper of Moscow for 1908 brought up an interesting story. It seems that the complexion of the Moscow City Council changed in 1908 and a "dry" majority was put into office. The City Fathers decided that the existence of saloons was a bad influence on students at the University of Idaho (I can relate to that...), and that they should be shut down before the fall term started. In a secret meeting, they chose not to renew licenses for Moscow's five saloons, even though their county and state licenses were still in effect. Of course the saloonists objected, since previously the city license was more or less a formality after getting a permit from the County Commission.

Brown & Grove, Joseph H. P. Nordhoorst, G. W. Gale's Hotel Moscow Saloon, John Olsen's Third Street Saloon, and the Commercial Bar eventually were able to get prorated refunds, but by the 5th of August of 1908 all were closed. In addition, Fred Franci's Moscow Brewery and the associated Hotel Corkery (which had just changed from the Hotel Commercial) were destroyed in a fire.

It's kinda funny...

A thought struck me the other day that most, if not all, token collectors who think it's neat to find a token from a cigar store, pool hall, saloon, etc. are not the type to frequent these places. General stores, yes. But a dance hall??? Can you picture collector _____ with a cigar in his mouth, a drink of Red Eye in one hand, and one foot on the brass rail of the bar of the Y'All Come Back Saloon?

Best,

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